DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 140 324 CS 203 860

AUTHOR Lynch-Brown, Carol
TITLE Are Paperbacks Magic?
PUB DATE [77]
NOTE 10p.; Report prepared at Florida State University

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Childrens Books; Childrens Literature; Elementary Education; Grade 5; *Independent Reading; Intermediate Grades; *Paperback Books; *Reading Interests; Reading Materials; *Reading Material Selection; *Reading Research

ABSTRACT

To determine whether children find paperback books more appealing than hardbound books, children's reactions to paperback books were compared with their reactions to the same titles in hardbound format. A total of 150 fifth graders were divided into two groups: 78 children (42 boys and 36 girls) examined 30 hardbound books, and 72 children (38 boys and 34 girls) examined the same 30 book titles, with the exception that paperback editions were substituted for 15 of the hardbound editions. After a leisurely examination of the books, the children indicated which of the books they would like to read, which they would not like to read, and which they were unsure about. Analysis of the data indicated that significant differences existed only with girls' choices and only for five of the books. The significant differences noted did not appear to result from the type of book binding in and of itself, but rather from differences in explicitness of title and attractiveness of cover design. (GW)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Carol Lynch-Brown

TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER.

ED140324

CS203460

ARE PAPERBACKS MAGIC?

Introduction

Carol Lynch-Brown

A development in children's books which has become widespread is the paperback book for children. Paperbacks had for years been adult reading only and few children's books were printed in this form. Paperbacks seem to attract children; whether this is due to desire to imitate adults or simply due to their convenient size, shape, weight, or perhaps, due to greater likelihood of being able to own a paperback, is not known. Nonetheless, publishers are aware of this attraction and are quickly accommodating it by publishing an ever increasing number of children's paperback editions. Paperbound books are an example of how format may be a vital factor in influencing children's reading interests.

There have been many testimonials lauding the beneficial effects paperbacks have on children's interest in reading. Bogart (1) studied the effect of paperbacks on the curriculum of the language arts in public elementary and secondary schools of New Jersey. His findings indicated an improvement in attitudes toward reading and a belief on the students' part that their school achievement increased. Manthorne (4) found that in Boston Public Libraries, paperback books were more frequently chosen than hardbound ones; the above mentioned results are exciting, but there did not appear to be any control for the Hawthorne effect and the results are subject to serious question for this reason.

Fader in Hooked on Books (2) describes a program using paperback books with high school age boys in a training school. The basic premise of the English program was saturation of students with reading material, particularly magazines, newspapers, and paperbacks. Ownership of the books and trading of books with one other, were encouraged in the

program. The success of the program with boys who would previously have been incapable of, or not interested in, reading has attracted much attention and other schools have modeled programs after this one.

The study which intended to limit the Hawthorne effect by means of control groups was that carried out in Oakland, California, in the Fall of 1965 by Lowery and Grafft (3). The primary objective of this study was to measure the effects of paperback books on the attitudes of 4th grade students. The 53 children in the control group used the school libraries. The 58 students in the first experimental group were supplied with 40 hardbound books which had the same titles as the paperback book used by the second experimental group. In the experimental group, the books were placed on tables in the classrooms and children were encouraged to browse and read the books from the tables during the 8 week experiment. The control classes went to their school libraries on a regular basis to obtain books during this period. The use of the hardbound, paperback and library books were supplementary to basal readers employed in the instructional program. Four different instruments were administered both as pre and post-tests to measure attitudes. The results indicated that children who used paperbacks showed increases in positive attitudes toward books and decreases in negative attitudes, whereas the other two groups, control and experimental with hardcover books, showed no significant changes in post-test attitudes.

The effects of paperbacks on children's book choices have been studied in less detail than many other aspects of format in children's books. The results reviewed above should be verified with different age groups and should be updated to see if the impact that paperbacks appeared to have had in the early 60's is continuing with children in the 70's. In addition, paperbacks should be studied to determine which elements of

paperbacks attract children. For example, paperbacks usually have colorful covers, annotations on backcovers and are light, small, compact, inexpensive.

Purpose

In this study children's reactions to paperback books were compared with their reactions to the same titles in hardbound format. All books were actually examined by the children. In addition, other factors of book format and authors' style were analyzed for their importance in children's choices of books.

Questions Studied

1. Are there differences in children's choices of books which may be attributed to the type of binding (i.e., hardcover, or paperback)?

2. Are there significant differences in children's choices of books which may be attributed to book format and author's style?

Procedures

The study was carried out in Leon County, Florida with 150 fifth grade children attending the public schools. The subjects were selected for the study by random selection of classes from all the fifth grade classes within the county system. Thereafter, a class list was obtained from each teacher and each pupil was randomly assigned to one of the comparison groups.

Comparison group HB examined 30 actual books in hardcover editions. Comparison group PB examined 30 actual books as had group HB with one difference - paperback editions were substituted for 15 of the hardcover editions. These were the same books and titles; only the binding differed. Group HB had 78 children, 42 boys and 36 girls; Group PB had 72 children, 38 boys and 34 girls.

The procedures for collecting data were identical for each group; the only differences were in the bindings of 15 of the books. During a two week period, the inventory was administered to the different groups in the libraries of the different schools. Each teacher was given a list of the pupils to send to the library at an appointed time. When each group of children entered the library, they were invited to sit around a large table where answer sheets had been placed. The examiner explained briefly to the children why they were there, asked for their cooperation and thanked them for their help. They were then instructed to complete the top of the answer sheet. Then the examiner read the directions aloud, asking the children to follow the reading on their answer forms. Any questions they had were answered. The answer sheets were titled "Reading Interest Inventory." The form requested Name, Age, and Sex on the top. In the instructions the children were admonished to respond as they felt, not as they thought they should, or as their teacher or parents might want them to respond. They were instructed to circle yes, no or ? depending on whether they would like to read, would not like to read, or could not decide whether they would like to read a book. Then the children were instructed to go over to the tables where the books were arranged numerically according to the numbers assigned them randomly. They looked at each book in order and then circled the response next to that number on the answer sheet. When individuals finished all thirty books, they handed their answer sheets to the examiner and returned to their classrooms. The children were encouraged to take as much time as desired and to open the books if they wished. The books were placed on five large tables with six books on a table and the examiner had the children go to the tables a few at a time so they would

not be able to observe the responses given by classmates.

The examiner was one and the same for all groups at all schools. Whatever effect the personality of the examiner might have had on the children should have been the same for both groups. Moreover, it was hoped by this procedure to limit the effect that individual teachers might have on their classes. In order to reduce a possible influence due to one group always being first, the order in which the groups arrived was arranged so that each group was first and second approximately the same number of times by varying the order with the different classes.

Analysis and Results

The first step in the data analysis process was to tabulate all the responses by totaling the number of yes, no, and ? responses by procedure group, by sex, and by individual book. Chi-square tables were used to test question 1. A chi-square was computed for each paperback book (15 in number) and its corresponding hardcover edition by total group and by sex. The chi-square scores which resulted were compared with chi-square tables to determine the significant differences existing between children's responses to the hardcover and paperback editions.

The chi-square analysis of children's choices of hardcover books and the corresponding paperback editions showed significant differences with girls' choices only and for only five books. Therefore, in most cases, book binding in and of itself did not appear to be a factor in children's choices of books.

The second question was then considered. If book binding was apparently not the deciding factor, what did cause the differences in the girl's responses? In the five cases in which significant differences were found, the significant difference was in favor of the paperback edition as summarized below:

Author	Title	p
Ball, Zachary	Bristle Face	p. < 05
Robertson, Keith	Henry Reed, Inc.	p. < 01
Eager, Edward	Knight's Castle	p. < 01
Alexander, Lloyd	The Castle of Llyr	p. < 01
Stefferud, Albert	The Wonders of Seeds	p. < 001

The hardbound editions of these books were all rather plain, having covers in muted colors with either no illustrations or stylized illustrations. The paperback edition of these same books had, on the other hand, brightly colored covers with realistic illustrations having well defined center of interest. Size of the hardbound books did not vary markedly; however, paperbound editions of these books varied from adult size to nearly as large as hardbound editions.

Among the remaining ten books in which no significant difference was found for either boys or girls was another group of five books wherein cover differences were not marked. These are the following:

Author	Title
Zim, Herbert	The Great Whales
Henry, Marguerite	Stormy, Misty's Foal
Zim, Herbert S.	Alligators and Crocodiles
Carlson, Natalie S.	Ann Aurelia and Dorothy
Milgrom, Henry	Explorations in Science: A Book of Basic Experiments

Both the hardbound and paperback versions of these books had cover illustrations of a realistic type and a definite center of interest. Only Miss Osborne-the-Mop differed in not having a brightly colored cover in the hardback edition, although the line drawing thereon was very similar to the full color picture on the paperback version. Thus, when covers were similar, children responded similarly - no matter what

the binding type.

The remaining four books, seemed to fit more closely with the first group discussed above rather than the second group: the hardbound books are dull in color, lacking illustrations on the cover where the paperback versions are brightly colored having illustrations with a definite center of interest. Why did the children respond similarly to the two editions? These books included:

Author	Title
Whitney, Phyllis A.	Mystery of the Haunted Pool
Graves, Robert	Greek Gods and Heroes
Cameron, Eleanor	The Wonderful Flight to the Mushroom Planet
Lawson, Robert	Rabbit Hill

These do, however, differ in one interesting way from the first group above. The titles give a clear notion as to the themes of these books, i.e., mystery, mythology, science fiction and animal story.

The significant differences in the first five books discussed above are, therefore, apparently attributable to interaction of title and cover design. The titles of these books, in contrast to the other ten, give only a hint of the theme at best, where the cover design of the paperback affords clear notions to the child about the content. With those books with titles giving better descriptions of content, no differences were found, nor were any differences found when cover designs were very similar in both editions of the same book. Thus, cover designs seem to be a significant factor in girls' choices of books when the title is somewhat vague. Boys, however, seem not to be influenced by any of these factors. It may be the case, therefore, that boys like to handle books leafing carefully through them to look at interior factors and the like, ignoring more or less the cover details. At any rate it seems clear that the one factor which in and of itself does not influence

significantly children's book choices is the type of binding. There were convincing reasons to believe that there were other format factors, such as cover illustrations and titles which were responsible for the differences. There is no magic in paperbacks.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Children's books, whether printed in hard or soft covers, should have front cover illustrations, illustrations within the text of a realistic style (or photographs) which serve to depict accurately the content of the book. Annotations of some detail should be printed on the back cover even on hardback books. The combination of these factors are likely to aid the child in finding a book he will enjoy and help him avoid the frustration of spending time reading a book which does not appeal. In addition, when there are books of worth which do not have these aids, as is the case with The Castle of Llyr, then class time could be well spent in book talk which would apprise children of the content.

Binding did not appear to be a significant factor in children's decisions to read these books. However, the great advantage of paperback books - their relatively low cost - cannot be ignored. Children may not choose a book from the classroom or library due to binding, although the binding may well be a significant factor in a child's decision to purchase a book. This factor of possible ownership may well be exploited by the teacher by setting up a used paperback exchange in the classroom, or, as a reward system, by allowing a child to choose a book he may own for having read a certain number of books. Further research into the potential paperbacks may have in attracting children to read could be done in a manner which would permit the influence of ownership of the books to be measured.

References

1. Bogart, Max. "Paperback Books in New Jersey." Paperbacks in Education. Edited by Vivenne Anderson. New York: Teacher's College Press, Columbia University, 1966.

2. Fader, Daniel N. Hooked on Books. New York: Berkeley Medallion Books, 1966.

3. Lowery, Lawrence F. and Grafft, William. "Paperback Books and Reading Attitudes." The Reading Teacher, XXI (April 1968), 618-622.

4. Manthorne, Jane. "The Supermarket Come-On." Paperbacks in Education. Edited by Vivienne Anderson. New York: Teacher's College Press, Columbia University, 1966.